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ABSTRACT

Student characteristics and attitudes for entering freshmen at the University of South Carolina (USC) for 1976-1986 are reported and compared to 1986 national norms for public universities. Comparative data for the 1986 class by on-campus or off-campus residence are also presented. The data were collected through the Cooperative Institutional Research Program of the American Council of Education. National norms, data for USC students for 1975, 1980, and 1985; and USC on-campus and off-campus student data are presented for the following variables: sex; age (17 or younger, age 19 or older); race (white, black); religious preference (Protestant, Catholic, none); liberal or conservative political views; probable major (education, business, computer science); parents completing college degree; estimated parental income of more than $30,000; average grade in high school (A or B); highest academic degree intended; reasons for attending college; reasons for choosing USC; student motivations in life; self-ratings on six qualities; attitudes concerning three social issues; and predictions about whether students thought they would be satisfied with college, get a bachelor's degree, or join a social fraternity or sorority. (SW)

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COMPARISON OF USC ENTERING FRESHMEN 1976 TO 1986

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The University of South Carolina--Columbia has been participating in the Cooperative Institutional Research Program of the American Council on Education since 1966. Data are collected annually during the orientation process and used to develop a profile of the entering freshman class. In addition, national normative data are also available. The following report offers a comparison of USC entering freshmen for the years, 1976, 1981, and 1986. Comparative data are available for the 1986 class by place of local residence. Finally, the 1986 national norms for public universities are shown to provide a national perspective. All data in the accompanying table are reported as a percentage of students agreeing with each item.

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COMPARISON OF USC ENTERING FRESHMEN
1976 - 1986

Variable	USC 1975 N=2049	USC 1980 N=2035	USC 1985 N=2224	USC On Campus N=1692	USC Off Campus N=521	Nat'l Norms '85
SEX						
Male	50.3	46.9	45.6	44.3	48.9	49.9
Female	49.7	53.1	54.4	55.7	51.1	50.1
AGE						
17 years of age/younger	7.4	5.2	2.8	2.8	3.1	2.7
19 years of age/older	19.0	17.4	18.4	18.4	18.4	19.4
RACE						
White	86.1	83.3	83.5	81.8	89.4	88.9
Black	12.8	15.6	14.8	16.9	7.7	4.8
Religious Preference						
Protestant	71.8	---	65.9	65.2	68.1	33.2
Catholic	15.7	---	15.8	17.2	11.7	31.6
None	7.0	---	6.7	6.2	8.1	13.0
Political Views						
Liberal	28.5	18.3	24.4	24.6	24.0	25.4
Conservative	15.3	26.2	21.9	21.9	22.4	21.3
Probable Major Field of Study						
Education	7.6	4.2	4.6	4.0	6.4	4.7
Business	22.5	23.6	31.2	31.3	30.1	24.3
Computer Science	---	3.7	2.1	2.1	2.3	1.7
Parents completing college degree						
Father	42.8	42.2	50.2	53.5	39.4	55.5
Mother	27.0	29.0	35.8	37.4	30.2	38.7
Estimated Parental Income						
More than $30,000	23.3	44.9	72.6	74.3	67.0	74.3
Average grade in high school						
"A"	15.6	23.4	20.5	21.1	19.2	34.2
"B"	63.1	61.7	60.5	60.7	59.5	55.6
Highest academic degree intended anywhere						
Bachelor's	41.2	34.4	30.9	30.3	32.4	33.5
Post-baccalaureate	53.9	62.7	66.9	67.3	65.7	64.8
Reasons for attending college						
Make more money	61.3	72.3	78.3	78.3	78.5	70.2
Get a better job	72.5	74.8	83.7	82.9	86.8	82.2
Get a good general education	69.4	72.7	66.7	67.0	65.2	62.3
Reasons for choosing USC						
Relatives wanted them to	8.4	6.4	7.9	6.3	13.2	6.6
Low Tuition	13.2	11.6	14.7	13.9	17.3	23.1
Good academic reputation	37.7	51.9	54.0	54.7	51.5	65.2
Do you have any concern about your ability to finance your education?						
Some/Major	58.0	65.5	58.5	58.8	58.0	62.1
Objectives considered to be very important						
Develop meaningful philosophy	65.7	54.3	43.2	44.0	40.5	42.8
Obtain peer recognition	50.7	62.4	66.6	68.0	61.8	58.4
Be well off financially	60.9	71.9	82.5	83.5	79.1	74.5
Rated self above average or top 10% in:						
Leadership ability	52.6	---	59.7	61.3	54.4	59.4
Self-confidence - intellectual	47.8	---	64.0	65.1	60.3	64.6
Self-confidence - social	44.2	---	59.5	61.3	53.5	53.2
Academic ability	55.7	---	66.3	65.7	68.2	74.8
Mathematical ability	33.5	---	43.5	41.9	48.9	53.1
Artistic ability	23.3	---	25.5	24.4	28.9	26.9
Student agree strongly/somewhat						
Wealthy should pay more taxes	72.5	67.0	68.3	68.1	69.5	70.3
Marijuana should be legalized	50.8	36.1	25.1	26.7	20.1	22.7
Death penalty should be abolished	---	25.2	19.8	21.1	15.8	22.8
Estimate chances are very good they will						
Be satisfied with college	59.5	59.3	53.9	55.8	47.9	57.3
Get married while in college	5.7	5.9	3.6	3.1	5.5	3.9
Get a bachelor's degree	74.9	68.1	67.6	67.5	67.9	79.8
Join a social fraternity or sorority	23.6	23.4	29.0	33.0	16.6	25.2

A. USC Freshman Changes 1976-1986

Since the beginning of the ten year period, there has been an increase in the percent of women and blacks in the freshman class; in fact, females now constitute a majority of the entering freshman class. Current students were much more likely to come from higher income families and to have parents who completed college degrees. Students in 1986 were somewhat more likely to have achieved an average grade of "A" in high school than were 1976 students. Current students were more likely to attend college to make more money and to get a better job than they were in 1976; however, they were less likely to attend college to get a good general education. The objectives of being well off financially and obtaining peer recognition were more important to students in 1986 than they were to students in 1976 although developing a meaningful philosophy was less important to the current students. Current students were about as likely to express a conservative as a liberal political view in 1986 in contrast to 1976 when students were far more likely to be liberal than conservative and in 1981 when they were far more likely to be conservative than liberal. Students rated themselves far higher in their leadership ability and intellectual and social self-confidence than 1976 freshmen although they were less confident about earning a bachelor's degree.

B. Comparison of 1986 USC Freshmen by Local Residence

In comparison with students living on campus, off campus students were more apt to be male and white. Students living off campus were much less likely to have parents who completed a college degree and were somewhat less likely to have earned a grade of "A" in high school. Students who chose to live on campus were more likely to come from families with a parental income in excess of $30,000. Off campus students were more likely than resident students to list the influence of relatives and low tuition as reasons for choosing USC. Resident students were more likely to cite as very important objectives the development of a meaningful philosophy of life, the attainment of peer recognition, and financial well being. Students living off campus were somewhat more likely to hold conservative views on social issues and were less likely to feel that they would be satisfied with college. Resident students were twice as likely to indicate an intent to join a social fraternity or sorority. In self ratings, resident students rated themselves higher on leadership ability, intellectual self-confidence, and social self-confidence. Students living off campus rated themselves higher on artistic ability, mathematical ability, and academic ability.

C. Comparison of USC Freshmen with 1986 National Norms

In comparison with the national public university norms, USC freshmen were more likely to be black and female. USC students were far more likely to be Protestant and less likely to be Catholic or indicated they did not have a religion. A lower percent of both mothers and fathers of USC students completed a college degree than students nationally. Nationally students were more likely to have an average grade of "A" and less likely to have an average grade of "B" than USC students. Making more money, getting a better job, and getting a good general education were cited more frequently by USC students as reasons for attending college than by students included in the national norms. Obtaining peer recognition and being well off financially were objectives rated as more important by USC students than students nationally. USC students rated themselves higher in social self-confidence while students nationally rated themselves higher in academic ability, mathematical ability, and artistic ability. Nationally, students expected to be satisfied with college and to earn a bachelor's degree more often than USC students while more USC students expected to join a social fraternity or sorority.

Prepared by Dr. Paul Fidler, Assistant Vice President, Career Center and Char Davis, Assistant Vice President, Student Affairs. Complete data are available in Dr. Fidler's Office.